

Greenbottom Mansion Broods Over Bygone Days

Old Jenkins Home Built 124 Years Ago

A stately mansion, in which abides the spirit of the Confederacy, stands overlooking the Ohio river at Greenbottom. It is the homestead of the Jenkins family, 19 miles east of Huntington, and seems to brood over bygone days as it nestles among a grove of trees.

The house, built 124 years ago by Captain William Jenkins, formerly of Tidewater, Va., reached its greatest dignity and charm in the heyday of the captain's grandson, Brigadier General Albert Gallatin Jenkins, dashing cavalryman of the Confederate States of America in the War Between the States.

The Jenkins family were among the first settlers of that part of western Virginia which was to become Cabell county. Captain William Jenkins, master of a fleet of ships that sailed from the James river to South American ports, came to Greenbottom in 1830 after tiring of the sea and longing for land.

(The first settler in what was to be Cabell county is believed to be Thomas Hannan, who came to Greenbottom from Botetourt county in 1796. Thomas Buffington preceded Hannan but Buffington only passed through, making surveys. Another early surveyor who paused briefly was Claude Crozet, former engineer in Napoleon's army and state surveyor of Virginia).

Chose Greenbottom

Captain William Jenkins chose Greenbottom for his new home because of its fertile land and natural beauty.

It was inevitable that Captain Jenkins' new home should become a center for the gay, gracious social life of the pre-Civil War era. The captain was a gregarious man with a liking for young people.

The home and its surrounding resounded with the joyous shouts of children and its

estate comprised 4,441 acres extending from Millersport to the Mason county line. It was said in those days that the Jenkins property "extended seven miles along the river front and far back into the hills."

Timbers for the Jenkins mansion were hewn from the forest that covered many of the original 4,441 acres. Massive stones were cut into blocks for the foundation. So solidly was the mansion built that it remains plumb and true today.

House Faces River

The house faces the river with its back to the Ohio river road as if to shun today's speeding motorists who scud east and west seemingly with no regard for the leisure and culture which still cling to its walls like the vines that have grown up around them.

The home originally had an extension used for a kitchen.

The kitchen was swept away by the 1913 flood. Within recent years the extension was restored. However, no effort has been made to restore other buildings which have disappeared — a smokehouse, servants' quarters, and an ample brick building which General Jenkins used as his office.

The reception hall where the social, intellectual and political leaders of western Virginia gathered in the 1850s is better than the scars of several floods.

The high water of 1913 climbed midway from the first floor to the ceiling and in several places plaster fell away. The flood of 1937 also damaged the house but it was repaired.

The war brought evil times to the Jenkins homestead. With the men of the family away fighting, the property deteriorated. The women lived in constant fear of Union raids. Sometimes food supplies dwindled,

particularly after Confederate forces laid levies upon the Jenkins crops and cattle.

Attended Marshall

Meanwhile Jenkins pere and his three sons were making names for themselves in the war. Albert Gallatin Jenkins attained the greatest renown.

He was a college-bred soldier with a gift for leadership.

Albert prepared for college at Marshall Academy (now Marshall College) in Huntington, then Holderby's Landing. Later, he enrolled at Jefferson College, then located at Cnonsburg, Pa. He was prominent in literary activities and was one of the founders of Phi Gamma Delta fraternity.

He was graduated from Jefferson College in 1848 with honors. He entered Harvard Law School; graduated with a law degree in 1850. He practiced law for a short time in Charleston but soon tired of it and took up

residence again at Greenbottom. In 1856 he was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention which nominated James Buchanan for president.

In the same year, Albert was elected to Congress and served two terms. He was a delegate to the Provisional Confederate Congress in 1861.

Saw War Coming

Albert, whose sympathies were profoundly with the South in the division of the North and the South on the slavery issue, foresaw in December of 1860 that war was inevitable.

He organized the Border Rangers at Guyandotte in that month. The rangers were organized to protect a Virginia flag which had been hoisted on a flagpole on the banks of the Ohio river. The company kept the flag up until April 20, 1861, six days after the outbreak of the Civil War.

The company disbanded in

The company was sworn into Confederate service May 29, 1861. The first armed clash was at Barboursville against a company of the Second Kentucky Infantry of the Union Army.

Later the rebel company moved farther south, merged with vast Confederate forces and largely lost its individual identity.

Four-Fifths Lost

Of the original 101 men, fewer than 20 survived the war.

Albert Gallatin Jenkins' rise as a ranking soldier was meteoric. He was promoted rapidly from captain to major, to lieutenant colonel, to full colonel and to brigadier general. He was wounded at Gettysburg and served in the Shenandoah campaign, in the operations of western Virginia and in the Wilderness.

General Jenkins set an example to his men of personal bravery. It is recorded that when the Union Army swept across the battlefield at Cloyd's Mountain "like a blue cloud," General Jenkins, pistol in hand, rode up and down the line in front of his wavering ranks oblivious to the hail of lead from the Union side and urging the Boys in Gray to hold fast.

These troops were not the general's regular command. Inspired by the general's utter fearlessness, the rebels rallied and retreated in orderly fashion.

General Jenkins was carried, mortally wounded, from the field. A Union bullet had caught him in the chest. He died two weeks later.

Buried at Spring Hill

The date of his death was May 21, 1864. He was only 34 years old. His long black beard lying over his chest, he was buried on the battlefield. The body was sent to Greenbottom after the war and was reburied in the

Jenkins family cemetery on a hillside south of the Ohio river road.

There it lay until many years later when it was reinterred in Spring Hill cemetery, Huntington, where it now rests in the plot reserved for Confederate soldiers.

Guyandotte, went to the home of Albert Gallatin Jenkins, ate dinner, then went to the old Greenbottom Church and reorganized. The 101 men present elected Albert captain. The company later became Company E of the 8th Virginia Cavalry, CSA.

When the home was built, the

General Jenkins left surviving his widow, the former Virginia Southard Bowlin of St. Louis, Mo., and four children, James Bowlin Jenkins, Alberta Gallatin Jenkins, Margaret Virginia Jenkins and George Jenkins.

The last member of the Jenkins family to live at the homestead was Margaret Virginia Jenkins, daughter of the general.

The property had shrunk. The hard times of the post-war period, and litigation, had reduced the original acreage of 4,441 to 150.

Owned By Biederman

The slaves were gone. Labor was costly. Miss Jenkins enter-

tained dreams of restoring the property to its pre-war glory and turning it over to the Daughters of the Confederacy for a permanent memorial, but nothing came of this.

Miss Jenkins and a sister, Miss Alberta Gallatin Jenkins, a celebrated actress living in New York, were the last members of the family to achieve public notice.

The Jenkins homestead now is owned by Max Biederman, former Huntington automobile dealer, whose Ohio river home is near the Jenkins property.

Mr. Biederman has the property in the care of tenants. The mansion has been kept in excellent repair and presumably it could stand another 100 years.

But never again will it become a social center. The harps, the chanting darkies with their banjos, the hoopskirted belles and handsome young men, have faded into the long ago.

H. M.



Life traveled at a more leisurely rate in 1907 when the Thompson and Barry families had an autumn picnic together by the bank of the Ohio River near the Albert Gallatin-Jenkins home at Greenbottom.

Seen in the photograph are, from left, first row, Lawson Thompson, now living in Marion, Ohio, Lester

Thompson, his brother, now of Gallipolis, Roscoe Barry, and Ralph Barry, his brother; second row, Miss Mina Thompson, now of Gallipolis, Miss Verna Thompson, her sister, now of Huntington, Miss Grace Thompson, another sister, Mrs. William Thompson, their mother, holding Miss Josephine Thompson, a sister, now of Gallipolis, Mrs. R. J. Barry, holding her son Theodore, Miss Nancy Barry, a sister, and Lester

Greer, Mrs. Thompson's brother; third row, Miss Grace Barry, a sister, Miss Edna Barry, another sister, Grant Barry, and Fred Barry, brothers, and Walter Thompson, brother of Lawson and Lester.

Many thanks to Mrs. Verna Buckner, 1209 3rd Ave., for the use of her picture. She is in the photo, second from left in the second row.